Read Jan.
C. H. M.

Watervliet Dec. 10th 1854.

Friend Malcom.

Yours of Nov. 25th was duly received, but I have not till now, had leisure time to answer it. As we consider your request a reasonable one, we will endeavor to answer your questions in a brief manner. Relative to the number in our Church, we suppose it would not differ much from 4000, located in different States, extending from the State of Maine, to Kentucky. They live in what we call Societies, containing from 150 to 500 members in each Society. So we are all confined to the United States, for there are no Shakers in Europe.

You ask if we have regular Ministers &c. We have what we call public speakers, who preach to the spectators in our public meetings on the Sabbath day. And they are frequently sent out on missions, when there is a call. These are some times in the capacity of Elders, and somes times not. But we have Elders appointed in every family; for instance, there are four families in what is called the Society at Watervliet. And there are 4 Elders appointed over each family, 2 males and 2 females. And the Society at New Lebanon is larger than this, consequently there are more families and Elders. And we have what we call a Ministry who are in the capacity of Bishops, 2 males and 2 females, who preside over the Societies of Lebanon and Watervliet. And they make it their home alternately at these places.

And all the Societies are similarly organised, having a Ministry appointed over 2 or more Societies, as their locations render it convenient, and they are called Bishoprics. But this Bishopric is the center of union, and all the rest conform to it, which makes us a united people, or brotherhood

You ask if our denomination continues strictly to forbid marriage. To which we answer, we do not forbid marriage now, neither have we ever done so. It is true we do not marry, and such as have been married, when they join our Society, live with their wives as tho they had none, according to the words of the Apostle Paul. We do not condemn marriage in its right use and proper place, but

it cannot belong to the followers of Christ, according to his own testimony, for he says, "The children of this world marry, and are given marriage, but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage." Luke XX-34. This was in reply to the Sadducees which denyed the resurrection. Christ is the resurrection from the dead, being the first that ever arose from the death ~~which~~ came by the fall, and those who are accounted worthy to obtain Christ are in the resurrection, whether in the body or out of it. They have found an element above the old creation which is of the earth, for they are in the new creation, the new heavens and the new earth. The Apostle understood the meaning of the resurrection, he said. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. Col. 3.1. So it is evident that there were those in the days of the Apostles, who had in a measure, risen with Christ, who had forsaken all dead works and followed him, and of course lived a virgin life. But there were some in the Gentile Churches who were not able to come to this, so the Apostle gave them permission to marry to save them from fornication, which is a worse evil. But he showed the effect that marriage had on the mind of the believer. He says, He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may pleas his wife." 1 Cor. 7. 10. And so of the woman. Christ said to his disciples "I have chosen you out of the world," (not in the world) Therefore as marriage belongs to the children of this world, and Christ has chosen his followers out of it, (for they are not of the world even as he is not of the world,) of course they have nothing to do with marriage.

You ask if we believe in a purgatory, and pray for departed souls. We believe that sin is all that separates fallen man from God. We also believe that all mankind must be purged from their sins, and even from that fallen nature which causes them to sin, before they can be perfectly happy. And this purging must take place either in this world, or the world of spirits. In short we believe that Christ came to bring free salvation to all the

human race, who are willing to accept of it on his terms. And he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me?" He took upon him the same fallen nature that we possess. "And was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin." For he never suffered himself to be overcome in one point, altho he was severely tempted.

And when he had finished the work, he said, "be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." And he tells us what composes the eliment of this world. It is "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. These he crucifyed by bearing his cross against them, and this is the world which he overcame, and set us an example that we might do the same. And this is the work which we are in, and the faithful will fight the good fight of faith till they overcome the world. And if they do not accomplish the work in the body, their probation will be extended to the world of spirits, and there they may finish it if they will. But we do not say that all will do this work, but all who ever find complete heaven, will undoubtedly do it. And in relation to praying for souls, we pray for them while in the body, and at the time they leave the body, when this is done, we leave them in the hands of a just and merciful God, who will reward them according to their works. But as an instance of a state of probation in the next world, we refer you to 1 Peter III Chap. 19 verse, Where it is evident that he gave the antediluvians an offer of his gospel.

You wish to know what our general mode of worship is. It consists of singing, dansing, marching, preaching, praying &c. But our prayers are generally silent, except those we sing in union, and this is frequent, for we have many of them. Vocal prayer is not practiced only on special occasions. Now perhaps you may think strange of our dansing as an act of divine worship, and would like to know what authority we have for so doing. We could say much in support of its being promised as the worship of the latter day saints, but as we have neither time nor space to say much, we will quote a few passages out of the bible, which will give some light on the subject. Read Jer. 31. 13. "Then

No. 13. If you should write, direct your letter to Albany. My address is,
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shall the virgin rejoice in the dance both young men and old to-
gether, for I will turn their mourning into joy and will com-
fort them and make them to rejoice from their sorrow." Show-
ing that the true Church in the latter day would be composed of
virgins both young and old. And that they would be united to-
gether and praise God, not only with the tongue, but with all
their faculties, for dancing puts the whole body in motion, with
every limb. And again, the Psalmist said. "Let the chil-
dren of Zion be joyful in their King, let them praise him in
the dance." The dancing of David and all Israel before the
ark, in that day was typical of the true worship of God, under
the gospel dispensation. And typical Israel, after crossing
the red sea, and obtaining victory over the Egyptians, went
forth in the dance. And Christs parable of the prodigal
son, alluded to this subject. And in it is represented the
state of falen man, who has wasted his substance in riot-
ous living, having strayed from God, he at length comes to
his senses, feels his poverty and laments his folly. Having
returned from feeding the swine, and having left his filthy compan-
ions, he confesses his sins and begs his father's forgiveness.
And being striped of his old garments of sin, and
clad with a robe of righteousness and purity, there is mus-
ic and dancing.

You ask if our community is in a prosperous condition,
To which we answer. It has stood above 70 years, and there
has never been a schism in it, but we are still a united so-
ciety. It is true we have not increased in numbers as other de-
nominations have, and the reason is, the way in which we are
called to walk, is so strait and narrow that it will not admit
of the pleasures and fashions of this world, as Christ said.
"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto
life, and few there be that find it." My sheet is full. Please
to accept this imperfect sketch, with our good will, and if you should
want further information, drop a line, and we will send you a book, which
will give you the general outlines of our faith. Farewell. Isaachar Bates.

Richard Dean.